1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2



030 ●175 race. In historical times it is known that the islands have been avoided by mariners navigating the adjacent seas, owing to the fact that the natives attacked all strangers who landed or were wrecked upon their shores. Moreover, the islands offered little inducement to visitors or settlers. The coconut, which is one of the mainstays of life in tropical islands, was not found in the Andamans prior to the first European settlement.

The earliest authentic reference to the Andaman Islands seems to be that of two Arab travellers dating from A.D. 871. In the eighteenth century the Abbé Renaudot translated the account of these travels. Of the Andamans we read, "Au dela de ces deux Isles on trouve la mer appellée d'Andeman. Les peuples qui habitent sur la coste, mangent de la chair humaine, toute cruë. Ils sont noirs, ils ont les cheveux crespus, le visage et les yeux affreux, les pieds fort grands et presque longs d'une coudée, et ils vont tout nuds. Ils n'ont point de barques, et s'ils en avoient ils ne mangeroient pas tous les passants qu'ils peuvent attraper. Les vaissaux se trouvant retardez dans leur route par les vents contraires, sont souvent obligez dans ces mers de mouiller à la coste où sont ces Barbares pour y faire de l'eau, lors qu'iis ont consommé celle qu'ils avoient a bord. Ils en attrapent souvent quelques-uns, mais la pluspart se sauvent[1]."

It would seem that the Chinese and Japanese knew the islands in the first millenium A.D., and referred to them by the names Yeng-t'o-mang and Andaban respectively[2]. Marco Polo gives a brief notice of the islands. "Angaman is a very large island, not governed by a king. The inhabitants are idolaters, and are a most brutish and savage race, having heads, eyes, and teeth resembling those of the canine species. Their dispositions are cruel, and every person, not being of their own nation, whom they can lay their hands upon, they kill and eat[3]." Some of Marco Polo's statements about the Andamans, as that the natives

[1] *Anciennes Relations des Indes et de la Chine*; De Deux Voyageurs Mahometans, qui y allerent dans le neuvième siècle; Traduites d'Arabe (par M. l'Abbé Renaudot). Paris, MDCCXVIII, pp. 5 and 6.

[2] Takakasu's Edition of I-tsing, pp. xxviii seq.

[3] *The Travels of Marco Polo*, Edited by John Masefield, *Everyman's Library*, 1908, p. 347.

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2



●175 live on rice and milk, and that they have coconuts, and plantains, are incorrect. It is evident that all he knew of the islands was derived from hearsay. The passage quoted is only of importance as showing that the reputation of the Andamanese was such as to cause them to be feared and avoided.

A more trustworthy account is that of Master Caesar Frederike, who passed near the Nicobars in 1566. "From Nicubar to Pegu is, as it were, a row or chain of an infinite number of islands, of which many are inhabited with wild people; and they call those islands the Islands of Andemaon, and they call their people savage or wild, because they eat one another: also, these islands have war one with another, for they have small barques, and with them they take one another, and so eat one another: and if by evil chance any ship be lost on those islands, as many have been, there is not one man of those ships lost there that escapeth uneaten or unslain. These people have not any acquaintance with any other people, neither have they trade with any, but live only of such fruits as those islands yield[1]."

There are numerous references to the Andamans in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, and all of them show that the islands were feared and avoided. During these and the previous centuries wrecks must have occurred in considerable numbers, and it is probable, from what is now known of the natives, that the mariners would be immediately slain. Visits were also paid by ships whose water supply had run out, and by Malay pirates. There is evidence that boats, either Malay or Chinese, sometimes visited the islands in search of edible birds' nests and trepang. In some cases Andamanese were captured and carried off as slaves. It is extremely improbable

[1] Extracts of Master Caesar Frederike: his Eighteene Yeeres' Indian Observations, *Purchas: his Pilgrimes*, London, 1625; Vol. II, p. 1710. In spite of the repeated descriptions of the Andamanese by early writers as ferocious cannibals, there is good reason to think that they have not deserved quite so evil a reputation. If they had ever been cannibals they had certainly abandoned the custom by the time the islands were occupied in 1858. It is improbable that such inveterate man-eaters, as they are supposed to have been, would have entirely altered their ways in the course of a century or two. The legend probably had its origin in the fact that the Andamanese attacked all strangers who landed on their coasts, and (in the North Andaman, at any rate) often disposed of the bodies of slain enemies by cutting them in pieces and burning them on a fire.

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2



that such visitors ever succeeded in establishing friendly relations with the islanders. 175

There is one way in which the life of the Andamanese was affected by the vessels that visited or were wrecked upon their shores, since it was by this means that they learnt the use of iron.

It is impossible now to determine the date at which they became acquainted with the metal. The earliest reference to the subject is in an account of a visit to the Andamans in 1771, where it is shown that the natives were at that time aware of the value of iron[1]. Until the middle of the nineteenth century the only supply of the metal was from wrecks, of which there have always been a fair number.

Until the end of the eighteenth century there was no attempt made to open up communication with the Andaman Islands, although the Nicobar Islands were the scene of several attempts to establish a colony. In 1788, owing to the menace to shipping constituted by the islands and their inhabitants, the East India Company, under Lord Cornwallis, commissioned Archibald Blair to start a settlement, convicts being sent as labourers. The settlement was founded in September, 1789, in the harbour now known as Port Blair, but then called Port Cornwallis. In spite of the hostility of the natives the colony seems to have been successful. In 1792 it was transferred from the first site to the harbour in the North Andaman now known as Port Cornwallis. The transfer was made with the idea of creating a naval base, for which the spot chosen was well adapted. Unfortunately the new site proved to be very unhealthy, and in 1796 the scheme was abandoned, the convicts were transferred to Penang, and the settlers returned to India.

[1] The account is that of a visit to the Andamans in 1771 by John Ritchie, published in the *Indian Antiquary*, Vol. XXX, 1901, pp. 232 seq. Two natives came off to the ship in a canoe, and Ritchie writes: "I gave them some nails and bits of old iron which pleased them much; and about three in the afternoon, they went into the canoe, and tried hard to pull the chain plates from the vessel's side. They went astern when this would not do, and dragged strongly and long at the rudder chains; but these were too well fixed; and at last, they went towards the shore at an easy rate, looking at their nails, and singing all the way."

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175 During the next sixty years the islands remained unoccupied save by the aborigines. There were a number of wrecks in different parts of the islands, and in some cases the crews were slain. In 1839 a geologist, Dr Helfer, visited the islands in the hope of finding minerals, and was killed by the natives. In 1844 two transports, the *Briton* and the *Runnymede*, were wrecked in a cyclone on Ritchie's Archipelago, one of the ships being thrown high up over a reef into a mangrove swamp. The crew and soldiers were safely landed, and were eventually rescued with hardly any loss of life. As they were a large party they were safe from the possible attacks of the natives, and they lived on stores rescued from the wrecks.

In view of the number of wrecks that occurred on the islands and the desirability of establishing there some harbour where vessels might safely call for water or shelter from storms, the East India Company again considered the question of colonizing the Andamans. When the Company, at the end of the Indian Mutiny, found themselves with a large number of prisoners on their hands, it was decided to create a new Penal Settlement, and the site of the settlement of 1788 was chosen for this purpose, and renamed Port Blair.

175 648 The Penal Settlement was established in March 1858, and has been in existence ever since. The aborigines were hostile from the outset, and gave much trouble by their raids. They made a determined effort to oust the invaders from their country. To establish friendly relations with them an institution known as the Andamanese Homes was founded, to provide free rations and lodging, and medical attendance, to such of them as could be induced to visit the Settlement. Through the efforts of successive officers in charge of these Homes friendly relations were established, first of all with the *Aka-Bea* tribe in the neighbourhood of Port Blair, then with other tribes of the South Andaman, and at a later date with the inhabitants of the North Andaman and the Little Andaman. At the present day there is only one body of Andamanese still persistently hostile, and these are the so-called *Jarawa* of the interior of the South Andaman. These *Jarawa*, since about 1870, have made repeated attacks on isolated parties of convicts and forest

1: Radcliffe-Brown E-5 (1906-1908)1922
AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175 workers and on the friendly Andamanese. Punitive expeditions
648 have been sent against them on several occasions, and attempts to set up friendly relations with them have been made by leaving presents in their huts, and by capturing some of them and keeping them for a time at Port Blair. At the present time the *Jarawa* are as hostile as ever.

619 Although of one race throughout, the Andaman Islanders are divided into several groups, with differences of language and culture. There are two main divisions, which will be spoken of as the Great Andaman Group and the Little Andaman Group respectively. The Great Andaman Group includes all the natives of the Great Andaman with the exception of those of the interior of the South Andaman who are known as *Jarawa*. The Little Andaman Group includes all the inhabitants of the Little Andaman, those of the North Sentinel Island and the *Jarawa* of the South Andaman.

619 These two different divisions exhibit many differences of
197 language and culture. All the languages of the Great Andaman Group are closely related to one another. They have the same grammatical structure, and a large number of roots are the same in all or in several of them. In the same way the language of the *Jarawa*, so far as it is known, is very similar to that of the natives of the Little Andaman. On the other hand when the language of the Little Andaman is compared with the Great Andaman languages there is a very striking difference. Of a vocabulary of several hundred words collected in the Little Andaman there were less than a dozen in which the root or stem was clearly the same as that of words in the Great Andaman. While the grammatical structure of the languages of the two groups is fundamentally the same, this can only be shown in a somewhat detailed analysis, and there are many important differences.

619 With regard to technical culture the same grouping appears. There is a general similarity between all the tribes of the Great Andaman Group, while the *Jarawa* and the inhabitants of the Little Andaman have a technical culture of their own that is markedly different from that of the other division.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175 whether they relate to individuals or to races; the origin of the belief in this instance may possibly be traceable to the inveterate hostility which they have manifested towards all strangers approaching their shores, but for which abundant excuse can be found in the accounts given by Capt. Miller[1] of the malpractices of the Malay and Chinese traders who visited these islands in search of *bêche de mer* and edible birds' nests.

To this belief may in all probability be also attributed the fact that these islands were avoided by most voyagers, and hence no records exist with reference to their history prior to the close of the last century, when the Honourable East India Company, recognising the advantages which the group afforded for a penal colony, sent down Lieutenant Blair (who had previously been commissioned to survey and report upon the islands) in charge of a small expedition and with instructions to provide for the reception of prisoners.

A Settlement was accordingly formed at Port Blair, then known as Port Cornwallis, where Blair displayed much energy and skill in his arrangements. After a brief residence of three years, during which the colony enjoyed excellent health, and Blair was able to report favourably of his relations with the aborigines),[2] orders were received from Calcutta for the removal of the entire establishment to the magnificent harbour in North Andaman, where it was proposed to form a Naval Arsenal. The transfer was effected in 1792, and the newly occupied station was named Port Cornwallis, while the recently abandoned Port was styled "Old Harbour," by which name it continued to be known till 1858, when, at Dr. Mouat's suggestion, it was appropriately changed to Port Blair. The new site selected for occupation, despite its apparent natural advantages, proved most unhealthy, and a year had hardly elapsed before it became evident that the change from South Andaman had been ill-advised; it was not, however, till February, 1796, that, in consequence of the continued sickness and high death rate, Government finally decided upon the abandonment of the colony, and the removal of the prisoners (numbering 270) to Penang, while the free settlers and troops were conveyed back to Bengal.

From this date the islands remained unoccupied by aliens for

[1] *Vide* Mouat, p. 22, and "Journ Anthrop. Inst.," vol. xii, No. 42, p. 339.

[2] Both his account and that of Lieutenant R. H. Colebrooke, who visited the islands about the same time (if not actually in each other's company), were published, the latter appearing in vol. iv. of the "Asiatic Researches." Although the accounts furnished by them do not in all respects accord with our present knowledge of the habits of these savages, it must be borne in mind that, apart from the difficulties which attend inquiries prosecuted as were theirs, with but little or no acquaintance with the language spoken by the savages; various changes or modifications have probably occurred during the long lapse of years which may account for many seeming discrepancies.

[Cannibalism]

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



sixty-two years, during which period all that is known regarding them or their inhabitants was derived from accounts published of casual visits paid by Government or trading vessels;[1] but as these add little to our information it is unnecessary to particularise them further than to say that they confirm the reports furnished by Colebrooke of the degraded condition of the savages and their inveterate hostility towards all strangers.

The modern history of the Andamans may be said to date from the latter end of 1857, when the scheme of founding a penal settlement and harbour of refuge in these islands, which had been under consideration for a few years, was precipitated by the events connected with the Sepoy mutiny. A Commission, composed of Dr. F. J. Mouat as President, and Dr. G. Playfair, A.M.S., and Lieutenant J. A. Heathcote, of the Indian Navy, as members, was despatched at this time with instructions to explore the coasts of these islands, to examine how far they were adapted for the establishment of a convict station, and to select a suitable site for such a Settlement.

Leaving Calcutta on the 23rd November, and travelling *vid* Moulmein, Dr. Mouat and his colleagues reached Port Cornwallis on the 11th December; they thence visited in succession Stewart's Sound, Long Island, Barren Island, Old Harbour, McPherson's Strait, Cinque Islands, Labyrinth Islands, Port Mouat, Port Campbell, Middle Strait, and finally Port Andaman, making careful observations at each of these localities, in the course of which many adventures with the aborigines occurred, the only untoward one being at the last stage of the expedition and on the last day of the old year, when an encounter provoked by the savages took place which resulted in a few of them being killed and wounded and one being taken captive.[2] The Commission returned to Calcutta early in the new year (1858), and at once submitted their report; they advocated the selection of Old Harbour as being admirably suited for the purposes of a penal Settlement, and suggested that the name of this harbour might be appropriately changed to "Port Blair," in honour of the distinguished hydrographer.

In recognition of the excellent services performed by the Commission the special thanks of the Supreme Government were

[1] The three chief incidents recorded and mentioned by Mouat are—1. The rendezvous at Port Cornwallis in 1824 of the fleet conveying the troops for the first Burmese war; 2. The visit and treacherous murder in 1839 of Dr. Helfer, a savant engaged in scientific researches; and 3. The extraordinary shipwreck in 1844 at Havelock Island of the troopships "Briton" and "Runnymede."

[2] This lad was taken to Calcutta, where he naturally excited great interest and curiosity. After a short detention he was conveyed back to the very spot which had witnessed his capture, but, owing to the kindness with which he had been treated, he appeared loth to part with his captors.

2:Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175 conferred upon Dr. Mouat and his colleagues for the judicious, prompt, and effectual manner in which they had carried out their instructions, and the business-like and practical shape in which they had embodied their investigations.

The Government lost no time in acting upon the recommendation of the Commission, and orders were at once sent to Captain (now General) H. Man, then on duty at Moulmein, to proceed to Port Blair and hoist the British Flag and take possession of the Andaman Islands in the name of the Honourable East India Company; before his return Captain Man was also to make arrangements for the immediate reception of a large party of convict mutineers whom it had been decided to transport thither without delay.

These instructions were duly carried into effect: the flag was hoisted on the 22nd January, and sixteen days later the first party of prisoners, numbering 200, arrived in charge of Dr. J. P. Walker, who had been appointed Superintendent of the new Settlement. During the first decade of the colony (1858–1867) the rate of mortality among the settlers was excessive, the annual average amounting to no less than 18·56 per cent., while in one year (1859) it will be seen from the annexed table to have reached the terrible figure of 63 per cent.

| Year. | Death rate per cent. | Year. | Death rate per cent. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1858–59 | 16·00 | 1871–72 | 1·72 |
| 1859–60 | 63·00 | 1872–73 | 1·64 |
| 1860–61 | 13·40 | 1873–74 | 1·51 |
| 1861–62 | 14·25 | 1874–75 | 2·51 |
| 1862–63 | 15·53 | 1875–76 | 3·67 |
| 1863–64 | 21·55 | 1876–77 | 4·17 |
| 1864–65 | 14·64 | 1877–78 | 4·90 |
| 1865–66 | 6·57 | 1878–79 | 6·73 |
| 1866–67 | 10·56 | 1879–80 | 4·63 |
| 1867–68 | 10·16 | 1880–81 | 5·12 |
| 1868–69 | 3·9 | 1881–82 | 4·85 |
| 1869–70 | 2·0 | 1882–83 | 3·3 |
| 1870–71 | 1·2 | | |

This extraordinary fatality was of course chiefly due to circumstances incidental to the establishment of a penal Settlement in an isolated tropical region peopled by hostile savages and covered by dense jungle largely fringed with mangrove, and rendered extremely malarious by numerous salt and fresh water swamps which are found throughout the group.

The necessity of clearing and occupying without loss of time

2: Man G-5 (1869-1880)1932 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175 the most commanding localities in the fine harbour of Port-Blair, and reclaiming as far as possible the contiguous swamps, naturally led to much sickness, which was aggravated by various other circumstances, of which the following were doubtless the chief:—

1. Transportation of a large number of prisoners unfit either to withstand the climate or to perform the work required of them under the exceptional circumstances in which they were then placed.
2. Want of sufficient nitrogenous food.
3. Absence of a sanatarium for the recovery of invalids.
4. Employment of convict labour on works of every kind throughout the year without respect to the suitability of the season for those involving exposure to malarious influences, as evidenced by the mortality in the rains having about trebled that of the dry months.
5. Difficulties experienced by working parties in consequence of the harassing attacks of the aborigines.

The above facts being at length recognised as calling for stringent measures of reform, active remedial steps were at once taken by the then recently appointed Superintendent,[1] with the remarkable result that the death rate suddenly fell from 10·16 in 1867 to 3·9 in 1868, while an average of 1·6 in the five following years, during which vast clearings of jungle and other important works were accomplished, testified to the vigour and success with which the wise and considerate system which had been inaugurated was carried on.

619 186 Prior to the formation of our Settlement in 1858, and for some years after, it is clearly shown, from the early records of our relations with the aborigines, that extreme jealousy and distrust prevailed among adjacent tribesmen, and even among scattered communities of the same tribe; these feelings naturally resulted in restricting intercommunication, and it is therefore not surprising to find that in many cases no knowledge was possessed regarding tribes distant only fifteen or twenty miles.[2] Of the *.ô·ko-jũ·wai-*, *.â·kà-.ked·e-*, *.â·kà-.jār·o-*, and *.ákà-.châriàr-* tribes, those living in South Andaman remained in ignorance till 1877, and it was not till 1879–80 that members of all the eight tribes of Great Andaman (*i.e.*, including the *.â-kà-.bal·awa-* of the Archipelago) were able to meet on friendly terms at the various Homes which had then been established for some years.

[1] Colonel (now General) H. Man.

[2] In 1875 it was found that the *.bō·jig-ngī·ji-* (or South Andaman tribe) had only then recently discovered that Middle Andaman was not, as they had supposed, occupied entirely by the *.á·kà bō·jig-yáb-*, but that it was shared by another tribe called *.á·kà-kŏl-*; of the territory further north all they were able to say was that it was occupied by the *.yē·rewa-*, a people they seem to dread equally with the natives of Little Andaman.

137 occur, sometimes over large tracts, conspicuous in the dry season when the leaves are off the trees. The huge buttressing of several species is a peculiar feature, and so is the growth of the forest in certain parts in belts, dependent apparently on the soil below: *e.g.*, the tracts of the bamboo (*bambusa schizostachyoides*) which almost exclusively occupy the indurated chloritic rock. Aborescent *euphorbiae*, screw-pines (*pandanus odoratissimus*), and large cycads give on the coasts a remarkable appearance to the forests. Several palms are commonly seen, though the cocoanut is not indigenous. The general character of the forests is Burmese, with an admixture of Malay types. In the cleared places about Port Blair the grazing appears to be abundant, but is not really so, owing to the action of two destructive weeds: the needle bearing grass (*avena fatua*), which is pretty but not edible by any kind of food animal and being of a stronger growth than ordinary grazing grass supplants it wherever it is not rigourously kept down; and the sensitive plant (*mimosa pudica*), an imported nuisance, which rapidly covers all open and low lying places and is edibile only by goats.

## IV. History.

175 **Ancient Notices of the Islands.**—The existence of the islands now known as the Andamans has, owing to the ancient course of trade, been reported from quite early times, though which of Ptolemy's island names ought properly to be attached to them may still be regarded as a moot point. Gerini, in his ingenious paper, *Notes on the Early Geography of Indo-China*, (*J. R. A. S.* 1897, p. 551ff) gives Bazakata for the Great Andaman, Khaline for the Little Andaman, Maniola for Car Nicobar, and Agathodaimonos for Great Nicobar. In the mediæval Latin editions of Ptolemy a remark somewhat as follows often appears opposite Bazakata:—"*cuius incolæ vocantur Aginatæ qui nudi semper degere feruntur, in hac conchæ sunt multæ.*" While it is on Maniola that the people are called *anthropophagi*. Even if one is inclined to accept this plausible theory, it is nevertheless, as will be seen from what follows, probable that Yule is right in his conjecture that Ptolemy's *Agathou daimonos nesos* preserves a misunderstanding, as perhaps does also the contemporary Aginatæ (with its later corruptions Allegate, Alegada on maps) for its inhabitants, of some sailors' term near to the modern Andaman. The old error that Ptolemy's maps were drawn by Agathodæmon, the grammarian of the 5th Century, A.D., is repeated in Portman's *History of our Relations with the Andamanese*, 1899, p. 50 and elsewhere.

Little Andaman, as a name, has a curious and obscure history on the old maps. In some of them we find Isle d'Andemaon (and Andaman) and also Isle de Maon (and Man), as if "Andaman" was the Great Andaman and "Man" the Little Andaman. Then in maps we have Chitre Andaman 1595, 1642: Chique Andemaon 1710: Cite Andemaon 1720, 1720 and Crita I. 1720 obviously corrupted out of Chitre, Chique and Cite. I have seen also Cite d'Andaman responsible for a town or city in the Andamans! And it is just possible that Chique Andemaon is responsible for the modern Cinque Islands between Great and Little Andaman, which are not five but obviously two islands. Chetty Andaman survived till 1858. Little Andaman, in its modern form, does not appear till the maps of Blair in 1790 odd.

175 101 **Origin of the name.**—The Chinese and Japanese knew the Islands respectively as Yeng-t'o-mang and Andaban in the first millenium A.D. (*vide* Takakasu's Edition of I-tsing pp. xxx and xxviii ff) which clearly represent the Andaman of the *Arab Relations* of 851 A.D. Then comes Marco Polo with his Arabic dual form Angamanain in 1292. After which we have Nicolo Conti in 1430 with Andemania, and after him almost every eastern traveller and mapmaker with some form of "Andaman." All these terms seem obviously to be based on the Malay name for the islands, as the Malays of the Peninsula have, for many centuries, used the islands for their piratical practices and for a trade in Andamanese slaves to their own country and Siam (this up to about 1860) and have known them by the term Handuman, which most likely preserves the very ancient Hanuman (monkey, *scil.*, savage aborginal antagonist of the Aryans) so well-known to the Indian Epics and carried down to the Malays in story and translations.

3: Temple G-5 (1901),1903 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



In the great Tanjore inscription of 1050 A.D. the Andamans are mentioned under a translated name along with the Nicobars, as Timaittivu, "Islands of Impurity" and as the abode of cannibals. In the Chinese *History of the T'ang Dynasty* (618-906 A.D.) they are called the land of the Rakshasas, and the Andamanese are to-day regarded as Rakshasas (or ogres, i.e., traditional savage antagonists of the Aryans) by the Natives of India on being first seen, and were so called at once when they appeared in the streets on a visit to Calcutta in 1883. As the abode of the Rakshasas the Andamans were also known to the Southern Indians in mediæval times and this persistence in regarding the Andamanese as the Rakshasas or their descendants confirms the ancient derivation of "Andaman" as a name from Hanuman through Malay Handuman.

The Andamanese have returned the compliment and know all Orientals as Chauga or ancestral ghosts, i.e., demons, and have preserved an ancient knowledge of them in a term for trepang or sea-slug as the "Oriental's slug," the collection of this valuable edible and of the equally valuable birds'-nests being one object of the visits of the Malays, Burmese and Chinese in days gone by, in addition to trapping slaves, which last pract cc no doubt had something to do with the savage hostility of the Andamanese towards all who landed on their shores.

**Mediæval and Modern Notices of the Islands.**—The notices of the Islands by the old travellers are continuous, and they regularly appear in some shape or other on all maps from the "Ptolemies" of the 15th-16th Century onwards, till we reach the middle of the 18th Century, when the East India Company's and Royal Naval commanders and surveyors began to make accurate reports of parts of the coasts in charts preserved for us in the works of the indefatigable Dalrymple. Owing to the piracies and ill-treatment of shipwrecked and distressed crews, the Company under Lord Cornwallis commissioned the great surveyor Archibald Blair in 1788 to start a Settlement on the ordinary lines, to which convicts were afterwards sent as labourers. Blair, with the acuteness he shows in all his work, fixed upon the harbour he called Port Cornwallis, but now known as Port Blair, for the Settlement and began his labours there in 1789. The Settlement flourished under him at that spot, but was removed in 1792 for strategical reasons to the present Port Cornwallis, where it gradually perished miserably in 1796 from the effects of a bad, unhealthy site and want of experience of the climate. Here it was under Major Kyd. Blair's and Kyd's *Reports* have all been preserved in the *Bengal Consultations* and are published in the *Indian Antiquary*, vols. xxviii *et seq.*

**Modern History of the Islands and People.**—Thereafter notices of the Andamans are not numerous, but they must have occupied the Government attention, for a formal *résumé* of information was officially drawn up in 1802. In 1824 the fleet, formed for the attack on Burma, made its rendezvous at Port Cornwallis. In 1825 J. E. Alexander, *Travels from India to England*, gives an interesting account of a landing at the Little Andaman. In 1836, Malcom, the missionary, notices the Andamans in his *Travels in Southern Asia*. In 1839, Dr. Helfer, the geologist, was murdered north of Port Cornwallis. In 1844 the transports *Briton* and *Runnymede*, from Sydney and Gravesend, respectively, were wrecked together on the Archipelago in a cyclone on 12th November. They contained detachments of the 10th, 50th and 80th Regiments, and the full record of the occurrence that has been left affords a fine example of pluck, endurance and resource in a great emergency. In 1850, a Mr. Quigley from Moulmein wrote a misleading and mischievous account of a visit to Interview Island. There is preserved an interesting account of the wreck of the *Emily* in 1849 off the West Coast and of the subsequent efforts to assist the crew. On this occasion the second mate was murdered by the aborigines, and there are records at this period of other murders dating before 1848 and continuing on till 1856. These led to the second occupation of the Islands, a step which was hastened by the outbreak of the Mutiny in 1857. This event threw a large number of mutineers, deserters and rebels on the hands of the Government, with whom it was difficult to deal, and in November of that year it was finally decided to send them to the Andamans to start the Settlement. The Government sent the "Andaman Committee" to make a preliminary exploration, with Dr. Mouat as president, and this Committee, in a *Report* remarkable for its common sense, fixed upon Port Blair as the site of the Settlement. Upon this report and an

3: Temple G-5 (1901) 1903 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



●175 equally able report by Captain Hopkinson, Commissioner of Arakan in 1856, the great experiment in treating convicts was commenced, one of the last acts of the East India Court of Directors being the formal confirmation of the Indian Government's proceedings. In 1872 the Andamans and Nicobars were formed into a Chief Commissionership, and in that year occurred the one event of general importance that has made the Andamans well known: the murder of Lord Mayo, Viceroy of India, by a convict while on a visit of inspection to the settlement, for the welfare of whose convict population he had worked so sympathetically.

3: Temple G-5 (1901) 1903 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



172 The largest and traditionally the oldest, the original, home of the race by a consensus of Andamanese opinion and worth scientific exploration (any other to be greatly deprecated), is the kitchen-midden of Wota-Emi on Baratang in Elphinstone Harbour on the east coast of the South Andaman.

In reference to the kitchen-middens it is worth noting that all Andamanese tradition commences with the cataclysm accompanied by a subsidence of a large portion of the surface of their old country already noticed, and the people point to certain ancient kitchen-middens, such as that at Port Mouat, on the sea level to prove it. They say that these were commenced by the survivors of the cataclysm and that the sites were previously high up on the mountain sides, where no one could build a kitchen-midden.

175 **Early Descriptions.**—I-Tsing, the Chinese Buddhist monk, in 672 A. D. (Takakasu's Ed. p. xxx) mixed up in his account of his travels the Andamanese with the Nicobarese, and describes them thus:—

"The men are entirely naked while the women veil their person with some leaves. If the merchants in joke offer them their clothes, they wave their hands (to tell that) they do not use them."

But the earliest distinct notice of the Andamanese is in that remarkable collection of early Arab notes on India and China (851 A. D.), which was translated by Eus. Renaudot and again in our own time by M. Reinaud. It accurately represents the view entertained of this people by mariners down to our own time.

175 266 "The inhabitants of these islands eat men alive. They are black with woolly hair and in their eyes and countenances there is something quite frightful * * * they go naked and have no boats. If they had they would devour all who passed near them. Sometimes ships that are windbound and have exhausted their provision of water touch here and apply to the natives for it; in such cases the crews sometimes fall into the hands of the latter and most of them are massacred."

This traditional charge of cannibalism still persists, though it is now, and almost certainly has always been, entirely untrue. Of the massacre of shipwrecked crews up till quite recent times there is no doubt; but the policy of conciliation, which has been unremittingly pursued for the last forty years, has made the coasts quite safe for the shipwrecked, except at points where the Jarawas touch the coast and the wilder Onges reside, the south and west of Little Andaman, the North Sentinel Island, south of Rutland Island and Hut Bay on its western coast, Port Campbell and some few miles to the north of it on the west coast of the South Andaman. Everywhere else shipwrecked mariners would find the people not only friendly and helpful, but likely to give notice to Port Blair at once of their predicament.

[766] **Charge of Cannibalism.**—The charge of cannibalism seems to have arisen from three observations of the old mariners. The Andamanese attacked and murdered without provocation every stranger they could on his landing; they burnt his body (as they did in fact that of every enemy); and they had weird all-night dances round fires. Combine these three observations with the unprovoked murder of one of themselves and the fear aroused by such occurrences in a far land in ignorant mariners' minds, century after century, and a persistent charge of cannibalism is almost certain to be the result.

101 **Language of the Aka-Beada Tribe used in the Report.**—The tribe occupying the shores of the Harbour of Port Blair and its islands at the British occupation in 1858 was, in its own tongue, the Aka-Bea-da. Its language was the first to be studied and its customs the first to be ascertained. It may still be called the tribe that is the best known and understood.

Every tribe has its own name for itself and its neighbours, and it is therefore necessary for the purposes of this *Report* to adopt one set of names only throughout, and the set most convenient is naturally that of the Aka-Bea-da. In this language *aka* is a prefix with small variations to nearly all tribal names and *da* is a suffix used with almost every isolated noun. For the sake of brevity I have throughout this *Report* discarded both these affixes and used the roots only of tribal names. But it must be understood that in actual speech an Aka-Bea would, in answering such a question as "what is your tribe?", reply

726 **Fighting Capacity.**—The Andamanese are bad fighters and never attack unless certain of success. During hostilities they never take any precautions as to their own safety by sentries, works, armour, or ruses of any kind, nor in the attack beyond taking advantage of cover. The only ideas of protection yet met with are among the Jarawas, who use trunk-armour consisting of a wide belt of bark and well devised sentry stations on the paths round their permanent communal huts.

619 **The Hostile Tribe of Jarawas.**—The Jarawas and some Ŏnges kill every stranger at sight, but the Jarawas only are in these days entirely hostile, and on the whole the Ŏnges are friendly, the friendliness dating from the capture and subsequent judicious treatment of 24 men, women and children on the Cinque Islands in January 1885. The only positively dangerous people are thus the Jarawas, and this is to be accounted for in this way. The ancient (as proved by old separate kitchen-middens) incursion from the Little Andaman through Rutland Island of that section of the Ŏnge tribe, which is now known as the Jarawas, into the South Andaman set up an implacable tribal hostility between them and the Beas, its other occupants, which has been extended to the foreign settlers in Port Blair, and has nowadays become an undying distrust of all strangers and an hereditary hostility towards them.

But Colebrooke, reporting in 1790, gives a vocabulary of a people, now identified with the Ŏnge-Jarawa tribe by its speech, and as theories have been built up on this fact, it is as well to see carefully when and where Colebrooke met the natives and who they were.

175 **Colebrooke's Knowledge of them (1789).**—Colebrooke left Diamond Island (Cape Negrais) on December 20th, 1789, and reached Port Cornwallis (*now* Port Blair) on December 23rd. On the 24th he went up the harbour and saw some natives (Jarawa Tribe) on Dundas Point. On the 26th he went up the harbour with Commodore Cornwallis (brother of the Governor-General), accompanied by a native who had been wounded in a skirmish with his tribe, found to be very hostile by the people of the snow *Viper*, and was kept on board the *Ranger*, Cornwallis's ship. He is described as "very cheerful and quite reconciled to his captivity." They went up the Bumlitan Creek as far as Bumlitan and met another native (Jarawa) who ran away. They dined (lunched) on "Mount Pleasant," a hill on the harbour near Viper Island, and met another Jarawa who exchanged his bow and arrows for a knife. On the 27th the wounded native, who had been on the *Ranger* three weeks, was put ashore by the Commodore, who uniformly treated the savages with extreme consideration. On the 28th they met the Jarawa on Dundas Point whom they had seen before, with a woman and a girl and found him again friendly. On the 29th there was trouble with the Bea Tribe at Phœnix Bay and with the Jarawas at Ariel Creek.

Colebrooke then went to the Nicobars and returned to Port Blair on February 20th, 1790, starting up north on 21st February. On the 23rd March at Port Meadows he saw some of the Bea Tribe leaving Entrance Island and saw some more hostile Beas, whom the party frightened off, coming from the North. On the 26th he went to the Archipelago, and met some hostile Balawas. On the 27th he went into Colebrooke Passage and saw some Bojigyab huts and some more of the tribe, who ran away in Elphinstone Harbour on the 29th. On the 30th they met some hostile Kols in the east entrance to Homfray's Strait and some more on the 31st off the north end of Long Island. On the 3rd and 4th April they found the Yere Tribe in Stewart Sound extremely hostile. On the 6th Blair himself met some Koras at the foot of Saddle Peak, who ran away. On the 7th Blair discovered the present Port Cornwallis and Colebrooke left for India.

It is clear from this that the only native from whom Colebrooke could have procured his *Vocabulary* was the wounded man on the *Ranger* and that man, as the *Vocabulary* shows, was a Jarawa. The tribes of all sorts—Jarawa, Bea, Bojigyab, Balawa, Kol, Yere, Kora, whom Colebrooke met, except in the case of one Jarawa and his family, exhibited either extreme fear or hostility.

● 175 101 **Explanation of the name Mincopie for the Andamanese.**—The first word in Colebrooke's *Vocabulary*, the first ever made of any Andaman tongue, is Mincopie for "Andaman Island or native country," whence Mincopie has

3: Temple G-5 (1901) 1903 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



become a persistent book-name for the Andamanese. It has been a great puzzle to scientific men ever since, though it is now to be identified, as will be seen later, with "Mongebe, I am (an) Onge," a phrase, which was perhaps pronounced and at any rate sounded in Colebrooke's ears as "Minggobie." His informant, in using it, apparently meant to explain that he was an Onge, or as the Jarawas seem to pronounce the name,—an Inggo.

**Relations with the English.**—Since the establishment of the Penal Settlement in 1858 an Andamanese Home has been created in Port Blair for the use of the aborigines, and several attempts have been made to civilise some of them and to bring up the children to a Christian education. These attempts have met with no reasonable success, the "civilised" returning to their original savagery at the first opportunity, the children deserting the schools and, except in an instance here and there, retaining nothing of their early education in after life. The existing use of the Home is that of a free asylum to which every Andamanese that likes is admitted. He may stay as long as he pleases and go when it suits him. While there he is housed, fed and taken care of, and for the sick there is a good and properly maintained hospital. From the Home, too, are taken such little necessaries and luxuries as the people desire to friends at a distance and during each of the many tours taken round the coasts by the officials. In return the Andamanese of the Home are employed to help in catching runaway convicts, in collecting edible birds'-nests and trepang and other natural produce, and in making "Andamanese curios," from which a small income is derived and expended on them. They have never succeeded in acquiring any true idea of money for themselves and all their earnings have to be administered for them. It is indeed against local rules to give them money, as it is at once spent in intoxicants. The present policy, in short, is to leave them alone and to do what is possible in the conditions to ameliorate their lives. The administrative objects gained by establishing friendly relations with the tribes are the cessation of the former and much too frequent murder of shipwrecked crews, the external peace of the Settlement and the creation of a jungle police to prevent escapes of convicts, and the recapture of runaways.

In the days of Blair and Kyd, 1789—96, the tribes showed themselves to be practically uniformly hostile, despite the conspicuous consideration these early officials exhibited, and remained continuously so after the commencement of the re-establishment of the Settlement in 1858, attacking the working parties of convicts, just as the Jarawas do still, for iron and articles suitable to them and robbing the gardens started for food supplies. These practices had to be repressed by force, and efforts towards friendly relations had to be postponed until respect for the settlers was established. The procedure officially then adopted and carried out with such success in the end by Messrs. Corbyn, Homfray, Man, Godwin-Austen, and Portman in succession was the simple one of providing the Home and visiting the people in their own haunts, as opportunity arose, with suitable presents.

In Appendix B will be found an abstract of the Jarawa raids on the Settlement, which have been continuous since 1872, when they were first differentiated. In the interval they have attacked convicts, usually at their work, on 20 occasions and friendly Andamanese Camps on 12 occasions. That is, they have made 32 attacks in 30 years. In these attacks 27 convicts and 4 Andamanese have been killed; 7 convicts, 2 police constables, and 5 Andamanese have been wounded. In counter expeditions and searches for the raiders 3 Jarawas have been killed, 9 wounded, and 20 captured. Of the captured 18 have been released in a short time and 2 have died. It will be seen thus that the hostility of the tribe is towards all strangers, including their own people, and that the policy of capture, kindness in captivity, and release with presents has not up to date borne any good fruit whatever. This is a very different story to that of their almost equally wild congeners the Onges.

## II. Physical Characteristics.

**Portman's and Molesworth's Enquiries.**—The physical characteristics of the Andamanese have been considerably studied by Mr. M. V. Portman and Major W. S. Molesworth, and as their work has never been published, the

9:Sarkar D-5 (1948) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Jarawa



### The North Sentinel Jarawa

The taming of the South Andaman Jarawa has been a moot problem of the local government in view of their occasional raids on the forest camps and offices. On this score the North Sentinel Jarawa appear to have an important function. Nothing is known of the length of their isolation on this little island of about 15 square miles but it is probably unaffected by the punitive expeditions, that are undertaken from time to time by the local government against the South Andaman Jarawa. When BONIG and his party landed on the west coast of North Sentinel Island on March 9th 1911, they were not received with volleys of arrows, but instead the "eight men on the beach and another five in two canoes" disappeared in the jungle. The same was true of those seen previously on the east coast. BONIG and his party visited some huts, which were of the lean-to type, and also went some miles inland without being troubled. BONIG therefore rightly concludes the following :

"The people appear very timid and it seems not unlikely that if they are approached frequently with presents, they will become friendly of their own accord. If this fails the small area of the island and the open nature of the forest would also make it easy to capture some, and after kind treatment let them go again".

As far as the present writer's knowledge goes this method has not yet been tried, but its utility lies perhaps in taming their South Andaman congeners. They could be made to settle round Port Campbell and other suitable areas on the west coast. A few communal huts built according to the plan and style of the South Andaman Jarawa should first of all be provided. They should be given all chances of expanding their population. Such an opportunity they are likely to seize if they suffer in any way from population pressure or from shortage of food and shelter. If their canoes are not seaworthy they should be provided with suitable water transport so that there may be frequent intercourse between the two islands.

### The South Andaman Jarawa

Although no systematic ethnographic studies on the Jarawa have been undertaken, RADCLIFFE BROWN (1922) gave sufficient hints regarding the unity of the material culture of the Negritos as a whole. Physically they belong to the Negrito race, as can be seen from the few natives captured from time to time by the local government (SARKAR, 1952). The punitive expeditions have also brought to light some important facts of their material culture.

Thus, during the punitive expedition of March 1911 (LOWIS, 1912) near Pap-lunta-jig a big communal hut was found which had been erected on the ridge of a hill and which measured 45′ × 30′ × 15′. It was raised high above the ground and was supported by a number of stout piles. The structure was different from the Onge communal huts in that the floor was raised, while in the latter the fidor is just the surface of the earth. The eves of the Onge communal hut touch the ground.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



## INTRODUCTION

A group of north-south running islands as they are, the Andaman Islands have as many as 204 small islands where the impact of civilisation and growth has been little and the human history has been one of stagnation rather than of chequered career. Being a land of aborigines, the foreign intrusion has been quite feeble though mention about these islands is found in the early records of the travellers. Though the knowledge about the islands is derived from the notes which date back to 2nd Century A.D., the contacts with the foreigners have been all the time transient and extremely feeble. Before the formation of the penal settlement, the islands have been known as an island of horror because of the presence of such tribal people who would eat up the man they encounter and as regards the wealth there has been imaginary illusion, sometimes being called as the Island of Gold. The historical record of the islands which can be built with a fair degree of precision is since the formation of the penal settlement. There has been the search for resources as well as their exploitation. However, all the attempts for finding minerals and the geological explorations have shown the possibility of the existence of some poor quality coal, copper etc. Virtually there has been a conspicuous lack of efforts for the development of the islands. The penal settlement which grew up in Port Blair did not have any considerable influence on the overall development of the islands. Nevertheless with the more intimate knowledge about the islands, the forest exploitation had increased and the land around Port Blair was cleared for agriculture. The little amount of agriculture that was started and fostered by the local-borns in and around Port Blair never expanded considerably and it remained confined to a few areas of South Andaman only. The aborigines were very much widespread and in the beginning they had exercised hostility and arrogance which had in course of time given place to a very friendly and amicable terms with some of the tribal groups i.e. the Onges and the Andamanese. The Jarawas, however, still now maintain their hostility and the attempts for bringing them under amicable terms have so long proved futile.

Nothing more deserves a special note in the islands than the aboriginal population. Because of the insular nature of the islands, the aboriginal population is considered to be one of the purest type though the foreign intrusion has brought about an extremely rapid impoverishment and decay only during the last few decades of contact with these aborigines.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

[P. 3]

## CHAPTER II
## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The insular position of the islands has made the Andaman groups of islands extremely obscure and even to-day the obscurity of the islands has not been totally dispelled. The islands being cut off from the rest of the world have remained as the abode of the negritoes until the very late arrival of the people from the civilised countries at the end of the 18th century. Though there were occasional incidents of plunder and raids by the pirates in the islands, no account of the chronological sequence of the facts and incidents can be built up except some erratic speculations gathered from the books written by the early traders. The isolation and the obscurity of the islands were removed to a considerable degree with the arrival of the British administrators and the consequent development of the penal colony. It is only after the formation of the penal colony that the historical account of the islands is made available. The history of the islands is extremely fascinating which depicts how the melting pot gave way to different people. It is only through the proper understanding of the historical background that the land and people of the islands hold up their true character, though in a treatise like this the study of history is beyond the direct compass. From the study of the history of the islands it can be concluded that geography has largely, if not wholly, determined the history of the islands. Geography, of course, is a study of different spaces (regions) but it is not a static one because of the great interaction of man with his land which gradually moulds it into different shapes and so it has got its reflection in history, a study of the different times.

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The historical phases of the islands can be roughly grouped into four main periods which show some distinct tendencies separated off from each other.

1. Upto 1788—The period of seclusion and piratical disturbances.
2. 1788-1941—The British regime—a period of foreign intrusion and settlement.
3. 1942-1945—The Japanese Regime.
4. Post Independence Period—Attempt of all-round regional development and welfare of the islands and the settlement of the refugees mainly from East Pakistan.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



175

(1) *The Period of Seclusion and Piratical Disturbances*

In this period of seclusion, people had some knowledge of these islands from the travellers, traders and sea-pirates owing to the central position of the islands on the trade routes of India, Burma and the Far East. The islands were inhabited exclusively by the aborigines. Mention of these islands dates back to the 2nd Century A. D. in the writings of Claude Ptolemy. The map referred to, in his writings, indicates the Islands of Buzacata to be in the place of the Andaman Islands and it is said that this island produces quantities of shells and the inhabitants go naked and are called Agmatae. It is believed that the Island of Buzacata means to refer to the Andaman Islands and such a peculiar name (Buzacata) has been achieved through the originality of the cartographer.

Later mentions of these islands are found in the collection of early Arab notes of the 9th Century on India and China which were translated by Eus. Renaudat and the people of the Andamans have been called Angamanians. Further mention of the islands is made by two Mohammedan travellers (Pemberton's General Collection of voyages and travels), Chinese Buddhist Monk I'Tsing (672 A.D.), Marco Polo (1286 A.D.), Friar Odoric (1322 A.D.), Nicolo Conti (1430) etc. From most of their writings it was evident that the islands were inhabited by very ugly brutes who would eat up any man whom they could lay hands on. Nevertheless, this was a land of riches and was named the "Island of Gold." An idea of the knowledge of these islands in the early days can be had from the notes of Marco Polo, a portion of which is quoted below.

"Angamanian is a very long island.. The people are without a king and are idolaters and no better than wild beasts. All the men of this island of Angamanian have heads like dogs, and teeth and eye likewise; in fact, in the face they are just like big mastiff dogs. They have a quantity of species; but they are a most cruel generation, and eat everybody that they can catch, if not of their own race. They live on flesh and rice and milk and have fruits different from any of ours."

[648] These types of early notes by different travellers are largely written from second hand knowledge and tales current in the neighbouring countries of the Andamans viz. Malaya, Siam, etc. Mr. Portman[1] opines

[113] 1 Portman, M. V.—A history of our relations with the Andamanese.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



that, "it should be remembered that it was to the interest of the pirates who made the Andamans a headquarters of their raids and also enslaved the aborigines, to exaggerate the real dangers they encountered and spread such tales regarding the Andamans as would keep them away." The islands have been ravaged by the Malay sea pirates from very early times. They used to come to collect shells and to carry on the slave-trade. These sea-pirates, through their exaggerated propeganda, made the islands a monopoly ground of their own and, in consequence, people used to know it as a land of horror. The slaves brought by the pirates used to find their way in the courts of Siam, Cambodia and Indo-China for many centuries, thus bringing about the deepest distrust and hostility on the part of the aborigines to all the visitors to the islands. 175 648

The name '*Andamans*' of the islands is a corrupt form of the name '*Hanuman*' or 'Monkey peoples', the aboriginal antagonists of the Aryan immigrants in India. In the earliest Hindu mythology, the *Ramayana*, these islands were believed to be a land of the *Hanumans*. Malayans used to refer to them as '*Handuman*' which is even a corrupt form of *Hanuman* and from Malay the knowledge about the Andamans first spread into the different parts of the world. Hence the '*Handuman*' has further evolved into '*Andaman*'. 101 175 648

(2) *The British Regime and the Period of Foreign Intrusion and Settlements Since 1788.*

Factual records of the history of the Andamans can only be had since 1877 with the steps taken by the British Government of India to found a penal colony in the islands. The disturbing activities of the Malay pirates and the frequent massacres of the ship-wrecked crews around the Andaman Sea necessitated the Government of India to form a penal colony in the islands. For the materialisation of such a proposal, Lord Cornwallis sent Lt. Blair and Lt. Colebrook to investigate into the possibilities of such a colonisation in the islands in the year 1788. In accordance with their investigations, the first settlement was established on Chatham Island* at Port Cornwallis (now Port Blair) consisting of a free colony. It was found that the North East harbour (now Port Cornwallis) was a better place for settlement because of its fine harbour and nearness to Calcutta. So, in 1792, the settlement was transferred 175 648

* Chatham Islands is the port of the Port Blair town and is a very small island.

10:Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
(1788-1942)



175
648

to the spot but it had to be shifted again to Port Blair because of the unhealthy climate and in consequence high mortality rates in that region.

But this settlement prospered little and for the next 60 years (uptil the second settlement) we have got very scanty records of the islands. The few important events are that in 1824 the British fleet were appointed at Port Cornwallis before the First Burmese War in 1825. J. E. Alexander landed, in a very interesting way in the Little Andaman, south of the South Andaman.

In 1837 Dr. Helfer, a Russian Geologist, was murdered by the aborigines while he was making expeditions into the islands in search of gold. In 1744 happened the queerly coincidental wrecks of the ships 'Runneymede' and 'Briton' bound for Calcutta with troops from Sydney and Gravesend respectively and there were various attacks on the troops by the Andamanese.

This period of great mishaps, shipwrecks and other disturbances made the government anxious. Fortunately for the British Government, this period synchronised with the Sepoy Mutiny in North India in 1857. Again a comprehensive report was submitted for making the islands a penal colony and in March 1858, the Andamans entered into second phase of its history as a penal settlement with the first lot of prisoners, 200 in number, and the mutineers of the Indian army who for the first time attempted to overthrow the British rule in India. They were accompanied by Dr. J. P. Walker. But the number increased to 773 within 3 months but 292 of them or 37 p.c. had escaped, died or were hanged.

Very strict measures were taken by Dr. Walker to deter these convicts from escape. But the administration of Dr. Walker was further weakened by frequent attacks of the Andamanese and this culminated in the Battle of Aberdeen on the 14th May, 1859. Dudh Nath Tewari, an escaped convict, who lived long with these aborigines, warned the settlement of the attack to be made in the Aberdeen, the heart of Port Blair, and as such proper steps were taken by the settlement to fight against the Andamanese. The escaped convict was released for his timely service.

Colonel J. C. Haughton (Oct., 1859) took the charge after Dr. Walker and he was a very loving personality amongst the convicts. He adopted a very humane method of treatment of convicts and established friendly relations with the Andamanese. In 1861 the administration of the Andamans was transferred from the control of the Government of India to the Chief Commissioner of Burma.

Colonel Taylor (1862) also adopted humane methods. 149 acres of land had been cleared for cultivation and there were some 3000 convicts

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
(1788-1942)



175
648

in the settlement by 1864. In this period Lord Napier of Magdala visited the islands and suggested certain reforms. The Government of India sanctioned a grant for the formation of the "Andamanese Home" which aimed at improving the relations of the civilised people with the aborigines.

In 1863 General Man took the charge when the number of convicts increased to 8873 and 3000 acres of land were cleared, 876 acres of land were brought under plough and as a result health conditions improved and death-rates fell appreciably from 10.16% to 1.2%.

General Steward (1871) followed General Man and devoted himself to the agricultural developments of these islands and while on a visit to the Andamans he was murdered by a convict at Hope Town on the 8th February, 1872. In this year the administration was first raised to the rank of Chief Commissionership and the Andaman Regulations of 1874 were drafted, placing the settlement judicially under the Government of India, instead of under the High Court of Calcutta, and making provisions for the release of the life time convicts after 20-25 years of penal servitude if they showed good conduct.

General Steward was followed by Colonel T. Cadell, who was here for 13 years and attempted the great economic development of the settlement. The Forest Department was opened and the foundation of the Cellular Jail was laid down, though it was completed in the year 1905 and the recruitment of the labourers was made from the convicts only. The Cellular Jail claims to be the biggest masonry building in the Andamans, situated on the sea-coast.

Sir Richard Temple (1894-1903) also did many constructive works such as the considerable enlargement of the Phoenix Bay dockyard and workshops, and the initial arrangements for the reclamation of South Point—Aberdeen Swamps were completed in 1918.

Later came Colonel Douglas (1913-20) and the first suggestion for abolishing the penal colony was forwarded by him. A forest colony was started in North Andaman Division which had to be closed down due to the general trade depression and the most remarkable achievement was the plantation of cocoanuts over several thousands of acres which afterwards formed a source of large revenue.

Colonel Beadon's tenure (1920-23) marked a change in the administrative policy. Only 1400 Mapilla rebels and some Punjabis were received as convicts and the general convict strength fell from 11,532 to 8823. Unmarried women convicts and also some categories of male

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
(1788-1942)



175
648

convicts were sent back to India. The convicts were provided with many facilities and they were also treated leniently. The cocoanut plantations developed by Colonel Douglas were made over to some private enterprises. Beadon contemplated various reforms and changes in the administrative policy of the Government, but failed to translate them into action due to the shortage of funds. The local-born association was started under the Presidentship of a Government Gazetted Officer for their welfare.

Colonel Ferrar (1923-31) possibly brought about the greatest changes in the island and with the closing of the penal settlement, schemes for colonisation and developments were necessary. The settlement in the Andamans had grown up in and around Port Blair in the South Andamans and everywhere the ephemeral huts of former times were giving way to well constructed two storied houses of sawn timber and iron roof, with stair cases, glared windows and other amenities. The old period of 10 years on probation as a labouring convict was abolished and after a few months' stay in the Cellular jail all the convicts found themselves placed on a wage basis and freed from the necessity of wearing convict dresses. During this time the willing convicts were allowed to go back to the mainland to bring their wives and families to the Andamans for permanent settlement. Many of the convicts, of course, returned back to the islands with frustrated mind as they were not recognised by their societies and families in the mainland to which they originally belonged.[1] All these changes in the administrative policy had their impact on the rural and urban population. In spite of the above cases, there was a rapid increase in the number of women and children in the Andamans and the social structure gained greater stability as regards the sex ratio, and this was probably a stepping stone to the successful approach towards colonisation.

A new deep-water jetty was built up at Chatham and was connected with the main island by a wooden bridge. Malarial swamps around the harbour were filled up by dredgers. A match factory was also built up at a cost of 3½ lakhs of rupees. Hence the period of Colonel Ferrar is a period of achievement when probably new life was infused into the people of the Andamans and had its effect on the all-round development of the South Andamans.

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1 Bonington, M.C.C.—Census Report, 1931.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Nicobars AZ7



(3) *The Japanese Regime.*

Under such circumstances of smooth development in the Andamans, the World War II darkened the horizon and no other part of India was so badly affected by the war as were the Andamans. The Japanese Army landed here on the 21st March, 1942 and had these islands under their occupation till 1945. This period was really a reign of terror and tales relating to the extent of their terrorism can be heard from the people with first-hand knowledge. In the beginning the relations of the Japanese with the local people were quite amiable. But a few instances of treachery committed by the people to contact the British Government in their attempt to overthrow the Japanese rule changed their relation to a bitter one. Hundreds of local borns were killed on the least suspicious by the Japanese Government. Naval blockade prevented supplies from outside and the Japanese were the pioneers in making the Andamans self-sufficient. From high Japanese officials to menials, all people were compelled to cultivate lands in order to achieve self-sufficiency at home. They cultivated all the available lands including hill slopes where they grew sweet potatoes and tapioca. The Japanese are also believed to have bombed over the Jarawa areas and surely they killed some. On the 8th October, 1945, the S. E. A. C. took the surrender of the Japanese garrison at Port Blair and immediate steps were taken for the rehabilitation of the surviving population who were famished and ill-clad. The civil administration was re-established on the 7th February, 1946.

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Although the Japanese regime was a reign of terror, they at least showed the proper channel to develop the islands. They attained self-sufficiency in the Andamans, constructed 22 miles of road and tried for proper defence of the islands and developed industries based on local raw-materials. Whatever criticism may follow regarding such steps taken by the Japanese, it is to be believed that such isolated islands must follow this channel for their economic development.

(4) *Post-Independence Period.*

Since the 15th August, 1947 the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have shared independence with India. They now constitute the only 'D' class 'State' of the Republic of India, ruled by a Chief Commissioner directly nominated by the Indian President. Because of the meagreness of population adult franchise is not in vogue here and as such there is no representative from the Andamans in the Indian Parliament, but there is only one representative to the Parliament from the whole of the Andamans and the Nicobars nominated by the President of India. In the Andamans a local advisory

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10:Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Nicobars AZ7



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council is nominated by the President of India on the recommendation of the Chief Commissioner which has been working in the islands for a few years.

The Government of the Andamans is attempting to colonise the islands successfully in collaboration with the Government of India, and in accordance with this principle the East Bengal refugees are being rehabilitated in the islands. An all-round economic development is aimed at and its supplementation depends upon the future Five Year Plans.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Negritos



food lie in a chain running from north to south along the islands between Little and Great Andamans. This has been one of the most convincing proofs of the movement of the aborigines from the south to the north. Cipriani writes, 'All these organisations, with geographical names, camps, places for water and food, indicate an ancient navigating experience moving from the south to the north. About a century and half ago the Jarawas are said to have still been in possession of canoes and the same is said of the savage inhabitants of the North Sentinel Island less than 50 years ago. In a surprisingly short period the technique of making canoes seems to have been completely forgotten as a result of the difficulties of using them.'[2]

## THE ABORIGINES OF THE GREAT ANDAMAN GROUP

Andamanese, as they are called, were the most widespread and the largest in number. They had split up ultimately into a few sub-groups from the north to the south. The different groups are *Aka-kora, Aka-boa, Aka-jeru and Aka-bea.* There has been a deplorable decline in the number of these aborigines who in the bygone ages exceeded all other groups in number. At present the number is only 23, a considerable reduction from the number 625 only in the beginning of the 20th century. Though the present importance of the Andamanese because of the extremely poor number is far from significant, they are of no small interest for the study of the anthropologist, especially the impact of these people with the later settlers.

The consequences of the impact of the outsiders on the Andamanese have been far from satisfactory. With the formation of the penal colony, the aborigines continued to develop feud and on the 14th of May, 1959 a clash between the aborigines and the Govt. occurred which is known as the Battle of Aberdeen. Aberdeen is at the heart of the town of Port Blair. Efforts of pacifying these aborigines were made and for bringing them into closer terms of amity, the 'Andamanese Home' was started in 1863 by Rev. H. Corbyn Chaplain. They were employed for working with the convicts taught to speak English and wear clothes. The consequence of such an impact has been alarmingly devastating because of the infiltration of a number of vices and diseases which only paved the way for their impoverishment and decay (For further particulars see demographic characteristics).

2 Cipriani, L — On the origin of the Andamanese, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Census of India, 1951.

10: Sen K-3, 4 (ca. 1955) 1962 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onge



The contact of the Onges with the outsiders can only be traced since the efforts of M. V. Portman[1] to establish a friendly relation with these tribes from 1886 onwards. However the earlier contacts with the Chinese and Japanese were possible because these people used to frequent the shores of Little Andaman for collecting the valuable shells and the Onges used to be engaged by them as divers and in reciprocation they were given presents of alcohol and opium. In the initial stage of the attempt for establishing a friendly relation by Portman, the Onges proved themselves hostile which was evidenced from the poor fate of the crews of a ship 'Assam Valley' when it touched the shores of Little Andaman and it was through the great efforts of the punitive expedition led by W. L. Much that the dead bodies of the crews were recovered. Later on, a few Onges, all on a sudden, arrived at Cinque Island and were captured by M. V. Portman. Only 9 of them were detained and the rest 15 were released. These few captured Onges were closely observed and studied in Port Blair by Portman and were ultimately returned back to their native land, Little Andaman. The friendly treatment and the presents that these Onges had received from Portman, paved the path of establishing friendly relations with the Onges much easier and also made the subsequent visits of the foreigners much more welcome. After Portman, a few more contacts were made with the Onges by Prof. Lapicque in March, 1893, during the operations of 1911 and 1921, undertaken by Eicsktedt, a German anthropologist, in 1827, by Dr. B. S. Guha, Ex-Director Anthropological Survey of India in 1948 and by Lidio Cipriani, an Italian anthropologist in the year 1954 and in a few succeeding years. Still the knowledge about the Onges seems to be meagre.

Living exclusively in the Little Andaman and a few of them in the Rutland Island, the Onges live in groups on a septal basis with clear-cut boundaries of hunting group for each group. There is no permanent habitation or village of the Onges in any part of the Little Andaman and their huts are of two types—(a) the permanent type of communal hut called *bera*, and (b) the temporary type of shelter called *korale*.

The abundance of food and water has made the life of the Onges comparatively easy-going. All the groups are headed by a leader and each group is assigned a fixed territory. The community life seems to be extremely democratic in character which entertains and also maintains a perfect individual freedom and only in times of necessity, advice,

1 Portman, M. V—History of one relations with the Andamanese.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



have always been protected by the sea, which is almost invariably rough, and by a thick tropical forest which extends without a break over more than a thousand square kilometres, unpenetrated by outsiders and almost impenetrable.

## THE ARIOTO

The decline of the Andamanese began with the first landing of foreigners on the island and is similar to that of so many other primitive peoples who have come into contact with civilization; a detailed account of their decline would be long and pitiful. In the case of the Andamanese, however, demographic influences arising thousands of years ago must also be taken into account. Cut off by circumstances into small groups and separated at random by large expanses of sea or by the impenetrable forest, they gradually developed somatic and cultural differences of the greatest scientific interest. Among other things, languages became modified to such an extent that members of different groups are unable to understand one another. The Onges, for example, who in my opinion are the nearest relations of the Jarawas, are quite unable to understand their language.

The peoples of Great Andaman were the first to encounter civilization, when from 1858 onwards the Indian Government, then in English hands, decided to institute at Port Blair a penitentiary for the many political prisoners after the famous 1857 mutiny. Subsequently the government sent over convicts serving long or life sentences. The life of the deportees was atrocious during the first few years, owing to malaria and the absence of medical supplies. To the majority, therefore, deportation to the Andamans meant a death sentence. Even today the only large brick building in the Andamans and Nicobars is the penitentiary at Port Blair.

Before the building of the penitentiary the English had made several desultory expeditions to the Andamans, and even before then other foreigners had landed on the archipelago. It is known that Marco Polo, probably passing within sight of the archipelago in 1292, gave it the name of Angaman, and declared the inhabitants to be ferocious cannibals with dogs' heads. As a result, even the Asian pirates were for centuries afraid to land on the islands. The barbarous forays of Arab slave traders later awoke in the islanders

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Arioto



a furious aversion to foreigners. This hatred has been rekindled during the last hundred years by a number of unfortunate incidents, but at one time the islanders were favourably disposed towards seafarers passing by, if we are to believe Niccolo dei Conti and Cesare Federici, fleeting visitors to the islands in 1440 and 1569. They both wrote of the peaceful native canoes that approached their ships, and this is confirmed by other travellers, like the Italians Fra Odorico da Pordenone in 1332 and Giovan Francesco Gemelli Caresi in 1709.

Violent clashes with the coastal tribes only became frequent when the English began to take an interest in the Andamans as a possible penal colony. The first prisoners to be sent there were some Indians, in 1788. In 1796 the colony was abolished owing to the swift death of nearly all the prisoners from tropical diseases. The attempt was repeated in 1858 after a mission entrusted to F. Mouat, and this time the seeds of decline for the islanders were sown. Efforts were begun to approach the coastal peoples, and even, strangely enough, those of the forests, the now ferocious Jarawas. Some of these tentative overtures were well received, but once the islanders came to think they had been betrayed it was enough to rekindle the hatred of strangers which they have retained ever since.

The evidence obtainable from archaeological excavations shows that for thousands of years the people encountered by the English in the coastal areas were the sole inhabitants of Great Andaman, living by fishing rather than by hunting or cultivation in the forests. The Jarawas arrived later. Migration from Little Andaman, imposed in relatively recent times by lack of food, brought them to Great Andaman. Since the entire coastal region was already occupied, the new arrivals took refuge in the forests of the hinterland. There they were happy, for they found an abundance of wild honey and fruit which amply fulfilled their needs. A spontaneous equilibrium was established between the coast-people and the forest-people, and both prospered.

The arrival of an appreciable number of foreigners in 1858 immediately changed the situation. The peoples of the coast, who were the most anxious to make friends with the strangers, paid for this fatal error with virtual extermination. When the foreigners had definitely established themselves, the coastal Andamanese – *Arioto*

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Arioto



in the local language, as opposed to the people of the interior, the *Eremtaga* – appear to have numbered between six and eight thousand. Over the years their place has been taken by more than thirteen thousand foreigners, most of whom were deportees, enjoying relative liberty as servants of government officials, farmers and foresters. The settlers, voluntarily or involuntarily, introduced the islanders to alcohol and tobacco, forcing them to turn to the foreigners in order to satisfy their craving. In the famous and extremely frank work of the English explorer M. V. Portman (*A History of our Relations with the Andamanese*, Calcutta, 1899) official letters are reproduced which give precise instructions in the matter to government officials. The result of these instructions was to transform the Arioto into alcohol and tobacco addicts. Syphilis was passed to the native women by the deportees, and from them to their men. When, a few years after the mass importation of prisoners, the government authorities became aware of the infection among the Arioto, not one of them had escaped. The miserable twenty-three survivors of the eight to nine thousand of a century ago show the ultimate result only too well, and their final extinction is imminent.

Before the advent of the new civilization, the Arioto had divided up into at least ten distinct communities, but without any true tribal organization. They respected a form of chief, chosen by tacit consent for his personal qualities rather than by name or by birth-right; but the chiefs acted merely as paternal advisers, to be respected in times of trouble, with no illusions of authority. No one commanded, and none obeyed: all were content to follow the whim of the moment, with no conception of social obligation.

When the foreigners arrived, there were five main groups of Arioto on North Andaman, the Cari, Chede, Cora, Jeru and Tabo. Another five groups were in South Andaman, the Balawa, Bea, Bogig-iab, Joi and Col. With the numerical decline of the Arioto, who had always been endogamous within their group, a tendency arose for the survivors to merge and inter-marry, so that the twenty-three alive today are in fact the result of the mixing of the northern and southern Arioto, and of these with Indians and Burmese. The chief of these twenty-three individuals is Loca, a name in itself an indication of this ethnic mixture. Loca means 'whiskers', and he himself has a moustache, whereas pure Negritos have no body or facial hair.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Arioto
Jarawas



has a moustache, whereas pure Negritos have no body or facial hair.

## THE JARAWAS

For obvious reasons I was unable to carry out any studies on the Jarawas. Apart from a restricted area around Port Blair, on the east coast of Great Andaman, the whole island is a tangle of tropical vegetation, in many places impenetrable, or at most passable only by hacking a way through. A few roads radiate from Port Blair, but none penetrate more than twenty kilometres or so from the township. To the north of the town is a well-maintained police cordon that stretches right across the island from east to west to prevent infiltration by the Jarawas; those in the south were all rounded up some time ago. Only beyond the cordon do the Jarawas maintain their rule over the virgin forest almost unchallenged. Like all the Andamanese they are Negritos, small in stature and extremely dark skinned. Obsessed by a fierce hatred for anyone outside their own group, enemies even of the other Andamanese, they roam through the forest with their deadly arrows. Shot from their powerful bows, their dagger-sharp arrows penetrate deep into the body of the victim – they can transfix a man's chest. The bloody skirmishing which has gone on for the last hundred years shows no signs of lessening even today.

The Jarawa ferocity increased as the result of grave mishandling of the situation by the foreigners. In this connection the following sentences from Portman's *History* may be quoted: 'On our arrival the Jarawas were quiet and inoffensive towards us, nor did they ever disturb us, until we took to continuously molesting them by inciting the coastal Andamanese against them. After a few years of this disturbance, the life of the Jarawas became very hard and in retaliation they began to attack us.' As the author in part recognizes, 'It was our fault if the Jarawas became hostile'. This was a fundamental error. Petty pilfering committed in perfect innocence by the Jarawas, ignorant of Western ideas of individual property, led to vicious punitive expeditions. To this end fire-arms were given to the hereditary enemies of the Jarawas, the Arioto. Elated by their unexpected power, they at once began slaughtering any Jarawa within sight, and enjoyed themselves hugely.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Jarawas



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648

Portman, who was for a long time the English administrator in the Andamans, is one of the greatest authorities on the islands; in his excellent history he refers, with frank sincerity and detail, to the methods adopted in the anti-Jarawa wars. He tells of the payment of the Arioto with food, tobacco and alcohol, arms and ammunition for their ruthless fight against their forest kin. Since at one time the struggle seemed to the outsiders to be lacking in ardour and intensity, Portman received an order in 1884 to deprive the Arioto of all provisions, starting with food. This he was forced to obey, perhaps unwillingly. He certainly loved the Andamanese, and he understood and honestly appreciated their needs.

As he later did on Little Andaman, Portman then tried to approach the Jarawas; not on Great Andaman where they had become too dangerous, but on North Sentinel. He proposed to improve upon the work already initiated (with disastrous results) by Homfray who went to the island in March 1867, escorted by police and by a small group of Arioto. The hostility between Andamanese from different localities immediately made even the Sentinellese keenly resentful of the foreigners who were trying to make friends with them under the protection of their age-old enemies. The foreigners would in fact probably have been quite well received if they had not taken Arioto with them.

Homfray referred to naked men on the beach who fled with loud cries into the forest when pursued by Arioto. Portman repeated the same mistake. In his photographs, still to be seen in the Indian Museum at Calcutta, he actually uses the expression 'Hunting Jarawas' among the captions to the pictures he took on North Sentinel.

After several abortive expeditions by Portman, visits to North Sentinel were very few and far between until recent years. In 1926 a German, whose name became anglicized to Bonington, an intelligent timber merchant at Port Blair, became a government official in the Andamans once he had assumed British nationality. He reports having seen some Jarawas, who rapidly disappeared into the forest uttering such wild cries that they hardly seemed human. In 1933 other Indian government officials approached the island, and a lone Jarawa on the beach threatened them with an arrow. I myself planned to make a landing on 20 April 1934, but was prevented by a rough sea. I went right round the island, but no Jarawas appeared.

114

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onges



During the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there have been many attempts by outsiders to land on Little Andaman, but until recently none have gone beyond the coast, and the interior of the island remained unknown until 1952. Several people were drowned in the tremendous breakers, and a few were killed by the aboriginals. The last (undocumented) incident, involving Chinese sailors in search of water on the west coast of the island, appears to have taken place in 1949. There are no records of any attempt to land before 1825, when an English naval officer, T. E. Alexander, managed to do so, and was the first to report, in England, the existence of a fierce tribe of naked Onges. The encounter was bloody, as were many afterwards. Rumours (erroneous) were spread of cannibalism, as some English sailors who had managed to save themselves saw their companions being torn to pieces by the Onges: their hands, feet, legs and arms were cut off and the living remains were thrown into a great fire. This was, in fact, not cannibalism, but the satisfying of a superstition, already recorded by various well-known authorities on the Andamans, such as Portman, Radcliffe-Brown and others, that the spirit is immortal and stays by its bones. The spirit of an enemy could thus become a disturbing influence, which is to be avoided by totally destroying the living body with fire, so that the spirit flies with the smoke towards the sky, where it remains.

Some time after Alexander, various English officials tempted providence in Little Andaman[1] and finally, on 24 July 1885, Portman landed, and began intensive efforts to pacify the Onges. Well protected by a police force, he was the first man who had the courage to pitch camp on the coast of Little Andaman. For most of March 1886, he stayed in the north of the island, and then between 28 October 1886 and 21 January 1887, he went slowly right round the island, starting from his camp at Bumila Creek. In the same year, two officials of the Indian Cartographic Service sailed round the entire coastline of Little Andaman; the resulting survey was, however, very imperfect. Portman returned for a brief visit to Bumila Creek in March 1887. This time there was a serious incident with the Onges, culminating in the severe wounding of an English

[1] Homfray, 1867; Stewart, 1873; Homfray and Stewart, 1874; Cadel, 1880; Cadel and Portman, 1880; Portman, 1880 and 1882; Man, 1883; various abortive landings, 1884 and [illegible]5.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2
Onges



colonel who had accompanied him. After a series of similar incidents involving other people Portman went to Bumila Creek on 10 November 1891, for revenge. A number of Onges, including the one responsible for wounding the colonel, were captured and taken to Port Blair.

Other visits by various people followed, always very brief and always limited to the coast, but there were no landings of note. Various expeditions visited the coast of the island for a few days and even made contact with some of the Onges, but the interior of the island remained as unknown as before. In February 1951 I accompanied one of these expeditions, which again did not go beyond the coast. Those five days on Little Andaman were most revealing, and enabled me to plan the landing I subsequently made in 1952. I saw that the island was teeming with game, that wild fruit and edible roots were plentiful, and that the sea round the island was full of fish, lobsters, huge crabs and turtles. Moreover, the turtles laid eggs in the sand where it was very easy to find them by following the beasts' tracks. I realized that it would be unnecessary to bring in provisions, and that it would be possible to enter the forest unencumbered with anything more than guns, cartridges and a few cooking utensils. Every day during this short stay I went with a police escort as far as possible into the forest in order to reconnoitre. In some places I noticed recent traces of small bare feet, but no Onges appeared.

Realizing that mobility was essential for any expedition into the interior of the island, I prepared at Port Blair a number of small watertight metal boxes to hang from the shoulder, to take a minimum of necessities. The largest items in my own personal baggage were a mosquito-net, a very light hammock and note-books. Cartridges were to be divided among the boxes. Tents, camp-beds and other large equipment would have to be left in a base camp, which would be established on the coast and left under police guard with radio transmission apparatus for communication with Port Blair. If necessary, a portable radio could follow us.

Several factors made me want to return. There was the mystery of the unknown interior of the island. There was the prevailing lack of information of any kind about the Onges, even of their numbers. I wanted too to carry out an investigation of their somatic characteristics, using the greatest possible number of individuals.

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1968 AZ2 Andamans AZ2

CHAPTER FOUR

# A Journey into Prehistory

842 The complete lack of hygiene of the Onges does not explain their disturbing lack of fertility. Nor can filth, smoking or loose living fully explain the sterility of the surviving Arioto.

There must be some other cause, and this in all probability is merely biological. One might call it the senescence of a race brought about by their total isolation for thousands of years, exacerbated by being broken into small endogamous units, all mutually hostile. This is not the opinion of all (the few) who have studied the Andamanese, and the problem remains to be investigated further.

262 184 842 In the Onges at least it cannot be a question of malnutrition, as I had ample opportunity of seeing during my visits to the island. Food is abundant, both the land and the sea offer an inexhaustible supply, even to the point of sustaining life, alone, if necessary, to all the Andamanese. The Jarawas are the exception. Forced away from the sea into the forests, they are dependent on one source of food, and it is therefore possible to make some attempt to calculate the maximum number of people which could be supported by their territory. In the case of the Onges, however, living amid luxuriant vegetation, with a rich source of sea food nearby, a given area can support a far higher population, and the same is true of the Jarawas cut off on North Sentinel.

The food of the Jarawas consists mainly of pork, with fresh-water fish (including some excellent carp) river molluscs and crustacea in large quantities, roots, tubers, wild fruits and honey. The Arioto, staying as they did in the coastal areas of Great Andaman, must have lived mainly off the sea.

175 161 842 262 The small population reported in the Andamans by visitors to the islands in the middle of the last century cannot therefore be

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



attributed to scarcity of food, nor can nutrition have had any effect on the demographic decadence. Strict endogamy over thousands of years, and fragmentation into smaller and smaller groups is perhaps a more likely explanation of the situation. The last stage has now been reached; the Arioto, for instance, who numbered six hundred and twenty-five in the 1901 census, had dwindled to twenty-three in 1955. In that year there were only two young children, a boy and a girl (of different parents) and the girl, about five years old, clearly had a Burmese father. The boy, however, named Sirake and then aged about eleven, intelligent and alert, with the very blue-black skin of the Andamanese and typical hair, may well be of pure stock. He is the only hope of continuing the ancient Arioto line, but this will be impossible unless a girl of pure stock is born shortly.

This seems unlikely. With the exception of these two couples, the Aricto appear to be sterile. I have myself seen their sorrow at being deprived of children, and one of them, named Moro, of fairly pure stock, told me of his grief. He took me to his wife, also of pure Andamanese origin, and externally as normal and healthy as her husband, but deserted by the spirits of fertility. Through no fault of their own, the cause probably lies in both of them.

In all the Andamanese, fertility seems always to have increased from the age of twenty-eight and to end by the age of forty-eight – in many cases thirty-eight, although since none of them know their age, owing to the absence of any form of counting, their deceptively youthful appearance makes assessment of age extremely difficult. I met only one woman who, as far as I could estimate, had borne seven children, and of these only three were still alive in 1954; the widespread custom by which children are transferred from one family to another, even during the period of lactation, to 'share' the enjoyment of them, made all the usual means of assessing the number of births virtually impossible. In a number of childless couples whom I saw on Little Andaman, the women are under twenty-eight and there is still hope of fertility, even if it is late. This could happen in the case of the wives of the two leaders Cocheggi and Cendubài; these two men married two sisters, among the healthiest and most beautiful women on the island, Vaghèghe and Tocuaghèghe, both under twenty-two. Neither of them has ever been pregnant, although both are apparently normal and

11: Cipriani E-3 (1951-1955) 1966 AZ2 Andamans AZ2



All the evidence points to this being far more than mere supposition and even today the Onges persist in their tendency to expand towards the north. In 1953 I could find no trace of a number of Onges whom I had known in 1952; the others told me they were all 'dead', but it seems probable that they had migrated to the islands further north. And in 1954 nearly all the canoes belonging to the communal huts in the south-west of Little Andaman, which I had seen in 1953, had vanished and were said to have gone with the 'dead'. It is probable that they too had migrated to Great Andaman, becoming 'Jarawas'.

This is physically quite possible. Between Little Andaman and Great Andaman the Onges have a line of transit camps, still in use, where food and water are easily available. All have a name, and I followed the line myself. With the help of their fragile but very fast canoes, and without carrying food or water (which they know will be available at the next transit camp), they can travel very quickly. They take fire with them in the canoes in the form of a burning torch and while they are at sea, unlike the lazy pace of their normal attitude to life, they seem possessed by the desire to reach the next stopping point on terra firma.

Moreover, one may deduce from the fact that the names of these transit camps are all in the Onge language that the migrations have always been from south to north. Little Andaman, formed as it is mainly of coral banks and only projecting a short way above the sea, disappears from view in the tropical mists a few kilometres from the shore; from Rutland it is invisible, and as the Andamanese only travel by sea with land in sight or when its existence and direction is well known, no one from the north would have dared to travel south into the unknown.

We have already seen that the ignorance of the present-day Jarawas as regards the sea is no bar to a hypothesis of their original arrival in Great Andaman by sea. Colebrook, a hundred and fifty years ago, actually saw them with canoes, and Gilbert Rogers[1] recorded seeing canoes on the coasts of North Sentinel very similar to those of the Onges today. The accumulation, therefore, of this evidence and the general similarity of culture throughout the archipelago all adds up to inescapable conclusions.

Even the unique dances enjoyed by the Onges are to be seen

[1] *Andaman and Nicobar Gazetteer*, 2 January 1904.